

# *Canadian* ART

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GOODRIDGE ROBERTS

HENRI MASSON

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OTTAWA

VOL. III, No. 2, FEBRUARY

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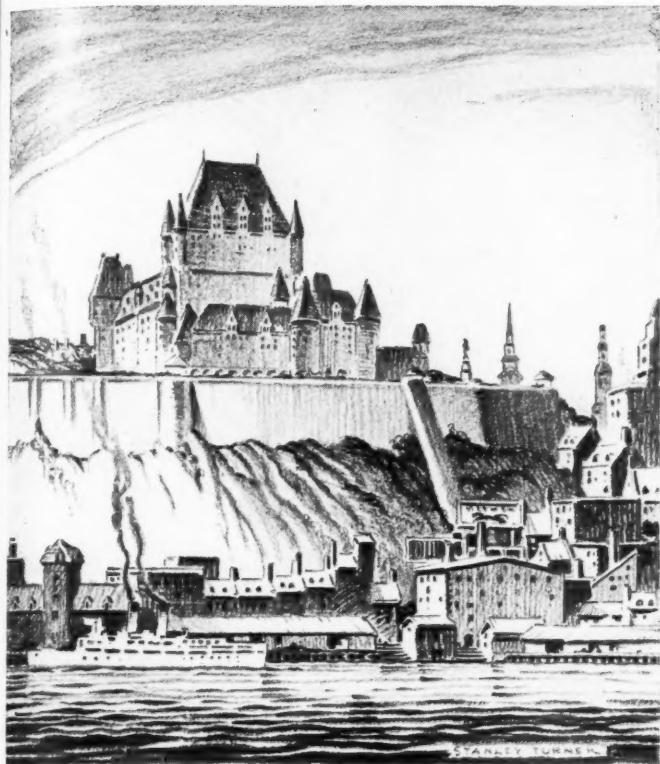
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THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA  
OTTAWA



# Canadian ART

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VOL. III

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1946

No. 2

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GOODRIDGE ROBERTS. *Landscape, St. Jovite*

GOODRIDGE ROBERTS. *Nude*



*Photos: de Tonnancour*

# GOODRIDGE ROBERTS

BY ROBERT AYRE

WITH the air of one who has just made a great discovery, and perhaps a little pleased with himself for being so astute, a dealer of the old school once said to Goodridge Roberts: "You know, I have found out what's wrong with your work." "Oh!" said the painter in his bashful way: "what is it?" "I'll tell you," the dealer replied, "it isn't interesting."

Now what the old gentleman meant by that wise remark was that Roberts didn't take the trouble to consider—as they say in the theatre—the box office angle. Quietly and obliviously he went his own way, too wrapped up in himself to realize that what the public likes in a Laurentian landscape is a splash of autumn colour, or the sparkle of sun on ice and snow, with a twist of smoke writing comfort above the steep-pitched cottage roof, and maybe a skier whizzing home. But Roberts wouldn't concede even a church steeple, to say nothing of a red sleigh; and as for a spanking team of horses (one white and one brown), it simply wasn't in him.

The funny part of it is that while Roberts wouldn't go to the public, the public, in spite of the judgment of the elder statesman, has come to him. His own public has found him out. He sold nearly all the paintings that hung in his recent exhibition at the Dominion Gallery in Montreal and before he went overseas as an R.C.A.F. war artist he was selling enough to keep him and his wife without teaching.

There is no danger that his success, and you might even call it a vogue, will go to his head. Goodridge Roberts is not selling because he has tried to make his painting more "interesting". He has met the public on his own terms, not on theirs, and if he gets enough support

it will serve only to make him more himself. Home from the war, back again in the School of Art and Design of the Montreal Art Association, he chose to teach only three days a week; he is looking for a room with a view so that he may do some winter painting in the mountains; and he is planning for the day when he can settle down somewhere in the country, far away from the distractions of city life. "I want long stretches of good painting weather," he says.

Long stretches, in the same place. He has had enough of wandering. Born in Barbados in September, 1904, Goodridge Roberts divided his childhood between Fredericton, the family home, and England and France. He studied two years at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Montreal and another two years, under Boardman Robinson, Max Weber and John Sloan, at the Art Students' League, New York. He was a draughtsman in the Department of Forestry of New Brunswick for a year and then he taught private classes and lectured in Ottawa. Living in a tent on one dollar fifty a week earned from a pupil, he spent the summer of 1932 at Kingsmere in the Gatineau hills and produced a season's work which brought him his first real recognition. It was exhibited in a show arranged for him in the Montreal Arts Club by Ernst Neumann, who had been a fellow student at the Beaux-Arts. This exhibition, which attracted the attention of John Lyman and brought the young painter his encouragement and friendship, this and a series of water colours done near Ottawa in the following summer, were largely responsible for Roberts' appointment as Resident Artist at Queen's University, under a Carnegie grant. He held this post for three years, teaching university students, school children, high school pupils and members of the Kingston Art



GOODRIDGE ROBERTS  
*Boy with a Book*  
 Art Association of Montreal

Association, delivering weekly lectures and arranging fortnightly exhibitions of travelling shows for the university. This work, and teaching in summer school at Queen's, so occupied him that he had little time for creative painting and, though he had been free from the worry of making a living, it was something of a relief when the Carnegie grant terminated and he left Kingston in 1936. For a time he was associated with Neumann in another teaching venture, the Roberts-Neumann School of Art in Montreal. Later he joined Will Ogilvie in the Montreal Art Association school and became chief instructor when Ogilvie went overseas.

His own experience as a war artist was not a happy one, and when he went to Orford Lake in the Eastern Townships last summer, he found no difficulty in putting that cold and frustrating year behind him and settling down once again in the quiet of the hills. The weather

wasn't kind last summer but when he came to hang his show at the Dominion Gallery he was surprised at how much he had accomplished.

Goodridge Roberts needs quietness and perhaps it is because the world, in an age of melodrama, feels the need of quietness that more and more people are responding to his wisdom. When I look at his painting and when he tells me that he goes to landscape for serenity, I think of Wordsworth in *The Prelude*; I think of Roberts as one "who looks in steadiness", as one who is not intoxicated with "the busy dance of things that pass away." He is not untouched by the tribulations of the world; he is far from misanthropic; he is the sort of man, modest, delicate and charitable, who wins affection. You have only to see him quietly enjoying his friends, drawing portraits of them without looking at the paper, cartooning when he is dummy at cards; you have only to see those quick

sketches and cartoons, the nursery battle pieces and the drawings of his dog; you have only to hear his laugh, to realize that he is anything but misanthropic, that he is not always serious. He would not go so far as to say with Santayana that only in solitude is it possible to love mankind, but it is in solitude that he finds his strength. A solitary, on intimate terms with the earth and with the deeper things it implies, avoiding the obvious, never "pampering himself with meagre novelties of colour and proportion", he loves to slip into the hills when no one else is looking and, alone with them, deepen his own intensive life.

The essential thing about Roberts is that he is a painter. In this he broke a solid family tradition. His father is Theodore Goodridge Roberts, the poet and novelist; his uncle was Sir Charles G. D. Roberts, his cousin, Bliss Carman.

But he longed in his childhood to be a painter and he pursued his dream with such singleness of purpose and developed his gifts with such patience and integrity that he stands today as one of the most important of Canada's younger painters. Painting absorbs him completely. It is in painting that he gives back what he thinks and what he feels, his experience and his philosophy. One of these days, he may essay sculpture, but this would not be a contradiction, for landscape is not all his life in art. He sees no reason why an artist should limit himself to one field, and he grows in stature as a painter of still life and the human figure, becomes more powerful in the study of form. Whatever he gives comes from the depths of himself. When you look at one of his paintings you feel that there is somebody in it, somebody worth knowing.

GOODRIDGE ROBERTS  
*Flowers with Chair*





GOODRIDGE  
ROBERTS  
*Lake on  
Grey Day*  
*Water colour*

*Photo: Dominion Gallery*

## ANONYMOUS ARCHITECTURE AND PERSONAL PAINTING

BY HUMPHREY CARVER

AS SOON as a painter's work becomes scarcely distinguishable from that of his contemporaries, he is usually regarded with some scorn. "Oh, he's just another of those Toronto water colourists!" we say. For we have been encouraged to attach importance only to those artists who strike out on new and original lines and who find unexpected methods of projecting their rebellious thoughts on to paper or canvas. The rebellion is essentially explosive and diffusive.

It is a rather curious phenomenon that at a time when the individual personality of the painter, the unique character of his personal expression, appears to be a matter of pre-eminent importance, a quite contradictory development seems to be taking place in architecture. To be accepted as a designer of any con-

temporary importance, an architect must submerge his individuality and adhere with a certain puritanical uniformity to the use of the most simple elements of composition. The vocabulary of modern architecture is confined to the unadorned geometrical solids—rectangular, prismatic, and cylindrical forms—varying only in proportion, colour and texture. This self-conscious economy of form deliberately limits the freedom of personal expression. Marks of individual style and mannerism are regarded as departures from the party line. The creator must remain anonymous.

It is significant that some of the best contemporary work has been produced by "teams" of co-operating designers. The English firm of "Tecton" was perhaps the prototype of such design groups,



while in the United States there have emerged large office organizations such as that of Albert Kahn, designer of monster industrial plants. Indicative, too, of this impersonal element in modern architecture is the term "the international style", suggesting not only the absence of personal expression but also the relative unimportance of regional characteristics. [The reality of this internationalism is to be found in the *Congresse Internationale des Architects Modernes* (CIAM) with its affiliated national groups such as the *Modern Architectural Research Society* (MARS) in England. Let us hope that the similar *Architectural Research Groups* (ARG) that have blossomed fitfully in eastern Canadian cities will now solidify their position].

What is the meaning of these divergent trends in artistic expression? Are we really inconsistent in our sense of appreciation in that we eagerly identify

the personal and regional differences of expression in painting, while at the same time we acclaim the universality of the modern architectural idiom? Undoubtedly the provocative interplay of local groups and personalities has stimulated Canadian painting; the recent emergence of the urban Montreal group has provided a foil for Ontario's school of domestic landscape painters and both have been enriched by the mystic fury of the great West Coast painter, Emily Carr. And yet, at the same time, we have welcomed those few examples of contemporary architecture which express neither personal, regional nor even national characteristics.

The enjoyment of modern architecture is derived from a psychological condition of which not even its exponents have been able to give a very satisfactory explanation. The theory of "functionalism" proved to be quite inadequate

JOHN MARTLAND  
*Control Tower*  
Municipal Airport,  
Edmonton, Alberta

By the interplay of angles, shadows and planes of transparency this little structure has achieved a contemporary decorative quality. As a look-out place it may be related historically with the mediaeval turret, the renaissance belvedere and the romantic gazebo. The piece also has associations with those marine constructions which, on account of their spatial geometry, have attracted the attention of painters such as Paul Nash. It is to be regretted that the windows of the *Airport Building* (like the three shown in the lower part of the illustration) are of a conventional pattern; they do not seem to have been designed in the same theme that inspired this eyrie for gazing into the free air of the western sky.



since it was not possible to define the legitimate "functions" of a building. (Would it be a permissible function of a building to disguise its own true function? The theory chases its own tail). In the universality of the modern architectural idiom, as it has travelled from the Bauhaus to Brazil and from Scandinavia to Los Angeles, can we perhaps identify an unconscious striving for the artistic expression of a universal society? It is quite evident that the idealistic social attitude of those who have enrolled themselves in CIAM, in MARS and in ARG has been a most important inspirational element. Underlying their architectural creed seems to be the belief that, throughout the world, the organic patterns of human society are fundamentally similar, particularly where democratic systems are setting the same framework up on our ways of living and thinking. It is Mr. Willkie's "One World". As standards of living and habits of family life become more and more similar it is to be expected that architectural forms and methods of construction will also become standardized. As a social art, architecture is able to express this convergence of ideals in its plans to provide similar standards of living. The element of uniformity in contemporary design is therefore a most valuable and important feature of international relations. If we do not speak with the same tongue, we may yet live in the same way.

Set against this social ideology that is implicit in contemporary architecture, is the individual expressiveness of modern painting. Though it may well be our purpose to give everyone an equal OPPORTUNITY in life and there must therefore be a certain uniformity in our social arrangements, yet the very objective of our civilization is that each person should pursue a worthwhile individual endeavour; the variety and freedom of personal expression is the living thing in our culture. It can therefore be seen

as a very necessary and proper thing that while architecture, expressing social aspirations, lays emphasis upon the universal elements of design (the anonymity of solid geometry) yet at the very same time painting, the art of individual expression, pursues the most divergent paths of personal whim and style. One may perhaps attribute to the comparative uniformity of Canadian society the lively development of painting that is taking place.

Anyone who surveys the new suburbs that are already, since the close of the war, beginning to grow up around our cities, can see this paradox displayed in vivid but inartistic form. Democracy has reduced urban dwellings to the form of standardized family containers placed in orderly rows upon long street frontages like cans coming out of a factory. This uniformity is the outcome of standardized wages achieved by union organization, it is the imprint of limitations set by building codes and housing legislation, it is the product of an architectural censorship imposed by mortgage companies, those inappropriate interpreters and arbiters of public taste. Emerging thoughtfully from container Number 12975 is Bob Mackay, father of Michael, Mary and young Jennifer. Manfully, like his neighbours, he strives to establish the individuality of himself and his family; here a leaded window-pane, there a fretted eave, a wrought-iron baluster or an exotic shrub. The building contractor, the realtor, the industrial worker, the veteran, the typical Canadian householder like his colleagues in other lands, all are wrestling with this same problem that, at a level of polite sophistication, is being discussed by the intelligentsia before displays of modern painting and architecture. On one hand the anonymous uniformity of democracy, on the other the yearning and unique individual.

We should get together on this.

CARL SCHAEFER

*Cold Front  
Moving In,  
Reykjavik,  
Iceland*

*Water colour*



Photo: R.C.A.F.

## ICELAND – ATLANTIS ON THE ARCTIC CIRCLE

BY CARL SCHAEFER

I HAD been sleeping on a pile of mail bags off and on for about eight and a half hours in the great cavernous belly of our Liberator. We were flying four to five thousand feet above a waste of monotonous grey cloud and there was nothing to see. The cold was paralysing, but it must have been a package of ice-box cookies in one of those bags some kind mother was sending to her son that dug into my ribs and finally got me on my feet. I crawled forward; Squadron Leader MacIntosh, our skipper said we would make landfall in fifteen minutes.

I just caught sight of the coast as we were coming in over the American base. Here was a red-brown waste of volcanic country, devoid of trees, stretching out to the north and east; beyond, Vatna Jökull, afterwards I learned the largest ice cap on the island, equal in size to Corsica. Reykjavik and our base sprawled out before us. We made a circuit of the airfield and set down at 15.40 hours,

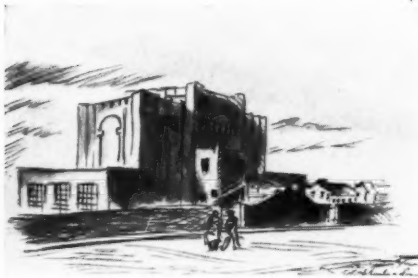
which was really 6.40 p.m., 18.40 hours, Greenwich Mean Time. We moved our clocks ahead three hours. Here I was to work on a new attachment.

Our kit was thrown into a lorry and the lot of us bumped over the crushed lava road to station headquarters. After the usual formalities of new arrivals, we collected our gear and looked for the squadron adjutant, a man always treated with great reverence, but not to be taken too seriously. I found Flight Lieutenant Merv. Hurst to be the best adjutant I had ever run into. He found me a nice Nissen hut with three characters firmly established; Butch, station traffic officer, a gunner who had done a tour of "ops"; Gal, equipment and messing officer, a good man to keep in with, and Cliff Saunders, radar officer and a wizard camera man. Here I bedded down.

We were comfortable with only four to a hut, storage space for equipment, a great oil-stove and toilet facilities,

complete with shower and even curtains on the tiny windows. Our section of the camp had been taken over from the Americans, they always did things up in great style.

Next morning, over at R.A.F. Intelligence, I was expected; had to show my authority and get passes to carry a camera and make studies. I found a friend! Squadron Leader Godfrey, senior intelligence officer, with whom I had worked in Northern Ireland. So I was lucky. He turned me over to our intelligence officer, Flight Lieutenant Jonas Jonasson of Edmonton, who was immediately interested in my job as official war artist. Joe was a second generation Icelandic-Canadian, with a great array of cousins still living in Reykjavik. He had friends everywhere and insisted I meet them all. I was more fortunate than I knew. It is an extremely difficult thing to be set down in an occupied country, especially such a remote one as this, and to try to find out about the people, how they live and what they think of us. Right now I must say I was never accorded anywhere a more generous and warm-hearted welcome, or received greater courtesy, kindness and hospitality.



*The Studio and Museum of Einar Jonsson,  
Sculptor*

When I was introduced as a Canadian painter, that must have turned the trick. Here the artist stands as one of the most respected individuals in a country of state medicine and high order of education.

All the arts are subsidized by the government; the artist is part of the living

and creative environment. He does not stand apart. His work is shared by all in the country. Even a mediocre artist, no matter how bad his work, is encouraged and given praise. One feels a great awareness of the arts. For Einar Jonsson, Iceland's foremost sculptor, the government has built a fine museum, housing his work, where the artist has his studio and living quarters.

Most people in the urban centres speak English and at least one other language besides their own Icelandic, which is a direct descendant of Old Norse. The population is roughly one hundred and thirty thousand. The development of modern housing and architecture during the past twenty years in the new section of Reykjavik, the capital of the country, is amazing. Houses are ferro-concrete in construction, are beautifully furnished, comfortably heated at low cost by water piped down from the hot springs, reaching the houses at boiling point. On a visit, dinner consists of thin pancakes with whipped cream first, then ptarmigan or salmon and all manner of sea food and Danish style pastry; their national dessert is *skyr*, a junket-like dish made with sour and fresh cream and eaten with sugar, and then large quantities of strong coffee.

Soon after, my friend, Joe Jonasson, introduced me to the work of Johannes Kjarval, the real genius of the country and Iceland's foremost and greatest artist, a painter of abstractions, strange fantasies of the old sagas, great dynamic landscapes of the lava fields and volcanic country of the interior. The Iclander has always been profoundly interested in the relationship between the seen and the unseen, the known and the unknown. Dreams and spiritual phenomena of all kinds have played a great part in his life through the centuries. It is all reflected in the art of the country.

I visited the house of Olafur Thor-darson, cousin of Joe and nephew of Kjarval and had the opportunity of seeing many fine Kjarvals. Then there was the fine collection of Stefan Gunnarsson,

whose hospitality I shared on several occasions. In a recent exhibition of Kjarval which closed shortly before I arrived, 240,000 kronur was paid for 37 paintings; that is an average price of over one thousand dollars a painting; 36,000 kronur, 6,000 dollars, was paid in admissions alone, all of which goes to the artist. I remember also Eggert Gudmundsson, a fine artist whose studio I visited on several occasions; and Thorvaldur Skulason, Jon Stefansson and Karen Thorarinsson, whose work I saw at an exhibition of twelve painters held during the week of the artists' congress. That was a special holiday. The Icelanders are great folks for holidays. Since their recent independence, their new flag, a red cross on a blue ground flies from a staff in front of every house and on top of every building. It presents a beautiful sight against such a grim background.



*Hafnarfjordhur, south-west of Reykjavik*

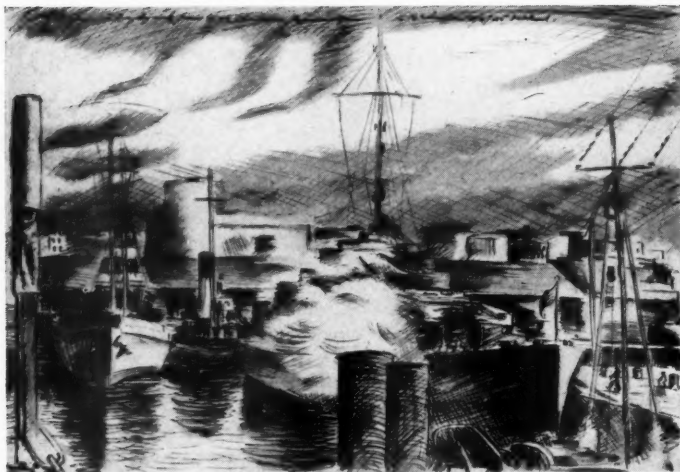
I was fortunate to meet Tomas Gudmundson, Iceland's most promising poet, and later Halldor Laxness, their leading novelist, who is tremendously interested in Canada. At present he is translating *Maria Chapdelaine* from the French into Icelandic. Their architects number among others August Palsson, Gunnlaugur Halldorsson, Sigurdur Gudmundson and Erik Einarsson.

Now my job was to cover the Royal Canadian Air Force section of the airfield, its dispersement, station activities and operations. Working conditions dur-

ing May and June were only fair; although we had practically twenty-four hours daylight, terrific gales carrying red lava dust were a particular bind.\* I've known the wind to swing 180 degrees in a few hours, then I'd have to shelter behind sand bags or in an old gun position. At times it was impossible to work, you were knocked off your feet and the temperature would change twenty-five degrees in no time at all, bringing rain or a great cold blast off the Greenland ice cap. Generally the weather was fine and moderately warm, very much like the United Kingdom, but when there's duff\* weather this region has probably the worst flying conditions anywhere. But there were compensations; the country on our coast was beautiful: spring flowers covered the deep tundra, the colour ranged from Naples yellow, whitish grey, grey red, grey blue-green to rich umber and sienna and the Venetian red of the lava. Great boulders lay strewn about; our camp lay at the base of Howitzer Hill and from the bomb dumps you could see Skjera Fjord stretching out to sea and away off to the south-west, a great flat plain and beyond, the Brennistein Range, a string of volcanic mountains standing on the horizon. Then there was Hafnarfjordhur on the west coast, a quaint fishing village just a short bus ride from our camp. We would explore the village and watch the trawlers coming in with great loads of halibut and cod. Fishing is Iceland's principal industry. They also raise sheep and their wool is of an exceptionally fine quality. All the boys on the station had sheep skins to ship back home to Canada.

Then too, there were the coffee houses in Reykjavik, where you seemed to drink strong coffee and eat all day long; the harbour packed with allied ships; the Polar Bear Cinema, free to the forces, showing the latest flicks. There were the NyjaBio and the TjarnarBio, fine movie houses in town showing the latest American films, then the British officers' club where you always managed to meet

\*Air Force term.



CARL  
SCHAEFER

*The Harbour  
at Reykjavik  
from H.M.S.  
Therlmere,  
minesweeper  
Drawing*

CARL SCHAEFER. *The Hot Springs at Geysir, Iceland*  
Water colour. Painted at midnight of May 21st, 1898





CARL SCHAEFER

*The Gow at Thingvallir*  
*Drawing*



anyone you were looking for. Here I met Lieutenant Harrold Alsen, Norwegian skipper of H.M.S. Therlmere, minesweeper, who entertained lavishly and gave me permission to make drawings of the harbour from his ship. He was most complimentary regarding my efforts and I settled for a group photograph with his second officer and myself with Alsen in the middle. Later he took me to the great celebration at the Hotel Borg on the occasion of the liberation of Norway.

Then there was the odd trip into the interior. Flight Lieutenant Hurst, our adjutant, arranged for a jeep. We packed plenty of rations and two extra "Jerry" cans of petrol and headed for Thingvallir. We passed along winding roads, farms with their old *baer* or farm house, a three gabled structure of stone and sod, with herds of sheep and greenhouses nearby, groups of riders, always trailing spare horses. The Icelandic horse, about the size of our pony, is a spirited animal with long mane and tail hanging to the ground.

Thingvallir is the site of their ancient parliament, more than one thousand years old, the oldest legislative body in the world. The great volcanic cliffs, broken by deep faults, stood on the edge of a long plain bounded by a long lake. Here were all manner of curious and fantastic constructions, the formation is

flat lying basalt, columnar jointed, broken by great waterfalls. Farther on our road became a track, off to the east we could see great pyramids of volcanoes and close by old craters with boulders strewn everywhere. We passed Jossafoss with its hydro-electric power station and had lunch by the falls, admiring its beautiful construction and bas-relief sculpture, miles from any settlement. Then to Gullfoss. We compared it with Niagara and its phoney floodlights and agreed that Gullfoss was more beautiful. Here one travels by chart and does a proper navigation job. Lucky we had the station navigation leader with us. We changed places in our jeep as often as we could, travelling at ten to twelve miles an hour; after six or eight hours of this you are all in. When I got up in front I made rough drawings as we went along. We got to the Great Geysir, an area of steaming hot springs, pools of blue and red boiling mud. It was late and I painted a fast water colour in the weird midnight light; again over those torturous roads, the great waste looked even more desolate in the early morning light. Every two hours we would get out and run up and down among the boulders to loosen up. Then on again passing more extinct cones and low lying craters and winding in and out between the shadows of great towering peaks. It was the home of the trolls and a landscape of the moon.

# HENRI MASSON

BY MARIUS BARBEAU

ON a winter evening in 1945, Henri Masson, painter of the Ottawa river, appears in his doorway to greet us. Tall and slender he leans forward slightly, as if through a habit of concentration and work. His sympathetic face with fine features and broad forehead is lit by a welcoming, yet quizzical, smile. Here is a man of ideas addicted to dreams and creation, in a world of his own. Yet his urbanity and magnetism keep him from withdrawing into his shell. Not for a moment shall we find him indifferent, aloof.

Masson forms part of his immediate surroundings. He resides in the western part of Ottawa, near the Ottawa river with its saw-mills and pulp-mills. Across is the city of Hull, with its wooden houses, with its constant movement of people in the streets, and beyond, the hill-bound horizons of the Gatineau country. More than anybody else Masson knows this varied panorama. Seldom, in his art, does he lose sight of its existence. For years he has expressed its features and character on canvas or paper; he has discovered its beauty and grandeur, serene or severe according to the season.

As soon as we enter we engage in lively conversation, yet with a divided attention. Here on the four walls interesting pictures attract us. He shares with us the enjoyment of modern art. Should our tastes prove too conservative and resist the impact, then beware! The old controversy is on once more: the ancients versus the moderns—the ancients whom we cannot forget, and the moderns who may still baffle some of us.

Let's not forget that the difference for our host between the moderns and the ancients is not as clear-cut as we might believe. Partial though Masson is to the moderns, he is aware of the towering power of the classics. Silently he worships at their shrine, but he does not for

all that linger in the haunts of the past. He belongs to our time and city. Like a pilgrim, he feels impelled to go on his way to a new goal.

His ready denunciation of the painters of the recent past strikes at the later-day followers of the old masters, at the smug patricians and academicians, at the camera-eyed realists, even at the more detached impressionists. A modernist, he surprises us by a last-minute *volte-face* against the spear-head of his own clan—the ultra-modernists. Their art he brands with surprising ire as purely cerebral, because it dwells in abstraction and seeks non-representative forms, lines and colours.

Gazing once more around we wonder at the identity of the painters whose pictures decorate the four walls. Surely these canvases are not all from the brush of Masson. This interesting face of a schoolboy with a mop of yellow hair, sparkling eyes of jade green, features boldly outlined against a reddish background. A striking characterization, from the hand of a master, yet almost a primitive. Beside it, another unidentified incursion into modern art: a strange revelry under the ghostly light of petrol lamps, truly a flare-up at night of sprites and werewolves. Perhaps a nightmare! Very broad and "modern" in treatment, this creation may be mistaken for a Pellan, a Borduas? Knowing Masson's dislike for all "ultras" in paint, we must wait and puzzle.

These last efforts, however, are not wholly in the nature of abstractions, nor are they non-objective. For they conjure, out of a shadowy world, a tangle of limbs and bodies, heads, hands and feet, in swift motion; they are wrapped up in the excitement of a rustic dance. Nothing here is at a standstill; motion speeds on without a stop anywhere. In this maelstrom, the painter's eye has gleaned its

ENRI  
MASSON

route  
ave

lection:  
S. Southam,  
M.G.



impressions in great haste and put them down at once, impulsively. Or else, memory has played the trick, and imagination has done the rest. One more step forward in the same direction would have taken the artist off the floor of reality and projected him into abstraction.

Who is the author of these strange novelties, we want to know; they are the most challenging hereabouts. Masson's only answer for the moment is an enigmatic smile.

Continuing the tour, we come upon a picture already familiar, for we have seen several of the same type, in former years—all by our host, we know: a winter scene, where young skaters enjoy themselves, huddled on a small ice rink. Somewhat naive or primitive, these scenes have won respect for our painter, in Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto and elsewhere. So have others of the same period: street vistas, clumps of shacks with odd shapes under snow or ice, in Hull, or glimpses from above, slant-wise, from a railway viaduct, into the slums.

On another wall of the same room, we recognize samples of Masson's earlier work: the poor folk of Gatineau Point whom the flood is dislodging from their precarious holdings at the edge of the river. Furniture, belongings, even cattle, are being salvaged in haste and anxiety. In this chaos even the painter has not had time to set his house in order—the pictures rather lack unity. The eye of the observer scatters its attention upon many details, to the detriment of the whole. In so doing, it has gleaned with humour some amusing bits, at the border of tragedy. The artist has retained a grim smile and let his brush run to caricature.

A glimpse into another room discloses another phase of the same story, with a show around the walls of typical specimens: street scenes in Ottawa under a summer rain—the pavement mirrors the houses, the shops, the baker's cart, antique motor cars; a *Fête-Dieu* procession at Perkins Mills, where the red skirts of young choristers sweep forward in the



Photo: Henri Paul

HENRI MASSON

*Le cheval de bois*

*Private collection*

march of the Sacrament; and last, a serene autumn landscape, under a sky lined with fleecy clouds anticipating a crimson sunset, in the rolling valley of the Petite-Nation.

In this inner room we recognize the earlier Masson. We have not kept up, it must be admitted, with our host's latest development. For the portrait and the dance are both from his brush—his latest of the past year or so. Many more likewise, we find, await us when we climb to the studio on the topmost floor.

Masson seeks his last effort, still fresh from the easel. But he stumbles upon the most antiquated thing imaginable. Caught by surprise, annoyed, he is bound to admit with a smile that this piece is nothing but "une croûte". He pushes it back. But we beg him to let it come to the surface; we wish to start at the very beginning, then to follow his progress through the years. An artist is ever prone to hide his antecedents and to focus attention on the present, at times to anticipate the morrow!

Here, dating back to 1926, is a pastel, *The Experimental Farm*; there, autumn scenes, also in pastel, which are dismissed as "pretty". These early pictures were not meant for the public; they are colourless studio pieces produced under the influence of the Art Association of Ottawa. For the following years, nothing at all! So Masson declares. As we remain

incredulous, he confesses: "I have destroyed that rubbish."

A few wood engravings turn up—of what date?—1931—about half a dozen marking the beginnings of the young engraver trying his hand as an artist. We notice the influence of the Group of Seven, and our host readily admits: "I knew their work, and the best I could do then was to follow them." Rummaging around, we yield further to curiosity and question the painter on his origins, his beginnings as an artist.

Born in 1907, in Namur, Belgium, of Armand Masson and Berthe Solot, both Walloons, his first recollections go back to a world of humble craftsmanship. His father worked in a glass factory, where large panels of glass were made. One of his maternal grand-parents, Arthur Bournonville, was an amateur painter, working in the seclusion of a room, at hunting scenes and rustic landscapes. The school-boy would watch the old man for hours handling the palette, mixing the colours, and applying the brushes to the flat surface. Imitatively he began to draw child-like things on whatever pieces of paper happened to fall to his hands; he called this "tripotage". His mother furnished him pencils and drawing pads. He built himself an easel, planted it in the garden, and was soon sketching on his own. Already his ambition was to become a painter. But many obstacles stood in the way.

During the first great war, and the German invasion, the Masson family stayed in Namur. One day the father died suddenly, and the mother moved to Brussels with young Henri, her son. The following years he went to the public school, then to the Athénée Royal. Drawing was his favourite pastime, and water colours were his medium. As for themes, there was little choice but in still life. Outside the classroom, nothing suited him better than to visit the museums—the Musée Royal and, on Sundays, the Galerie d'Art Moderne.

In 1921, Mme. Masson and her son, then aged 14, crossed the Atlantic; she was to marry a former Canadian soldier whom she had met at the end of the war. Once settled in their new home at Ottawa, the son was sent to the St. Jean-Baptiste school where, like other young strangers, he experienced some difficulty in self-adjustment. But soon he adapted himself to new surroundings, losing old-world preconceptions to become a true Canadian.

Two years later, he entered a metal-engraving shop as an apprentice, where his aptitude for drawing had led him, the more readily since a member of his stepfather's family was employed there. He could not then anticipate where

graphic arts might lead him. Apprenticeship in the engravers' shop meant, for him, three or four hours per day training his hand and his eye over the steel point of a graver against a copper plate, at \$4 per week, at first. Two years later he began to decorate jewels and chase metal ornaments. For instance, he helped in the making of some church plate in silver. At twenty-five, after having gained experience in varied jobs in the same shop, he assumed the rank of a master engraver.

In a scrap-book of this formative period, we find various pieces showing his progress in fine lettering—old English, block, script—and in producing scrolls, stereotyped patterns, and occasionally flowers. In a miniature landscape bearing the date of "le 15 juin/26", he reverts to the garden scenes overseas, where he had first tried his hand. In 1929, he married Germaine Saint-Denis of Ottawa, and went on faithfully with his job. An engraver's task is perforce monotonous, consisting as it does in repeating the same commercial patterns forever and spending much time sharpening his tools. Confronted with this everlasting dullness, a craftsman must either abdicate himself or else throw the window wide upon fancies and daydreams.

HENRI MASSON

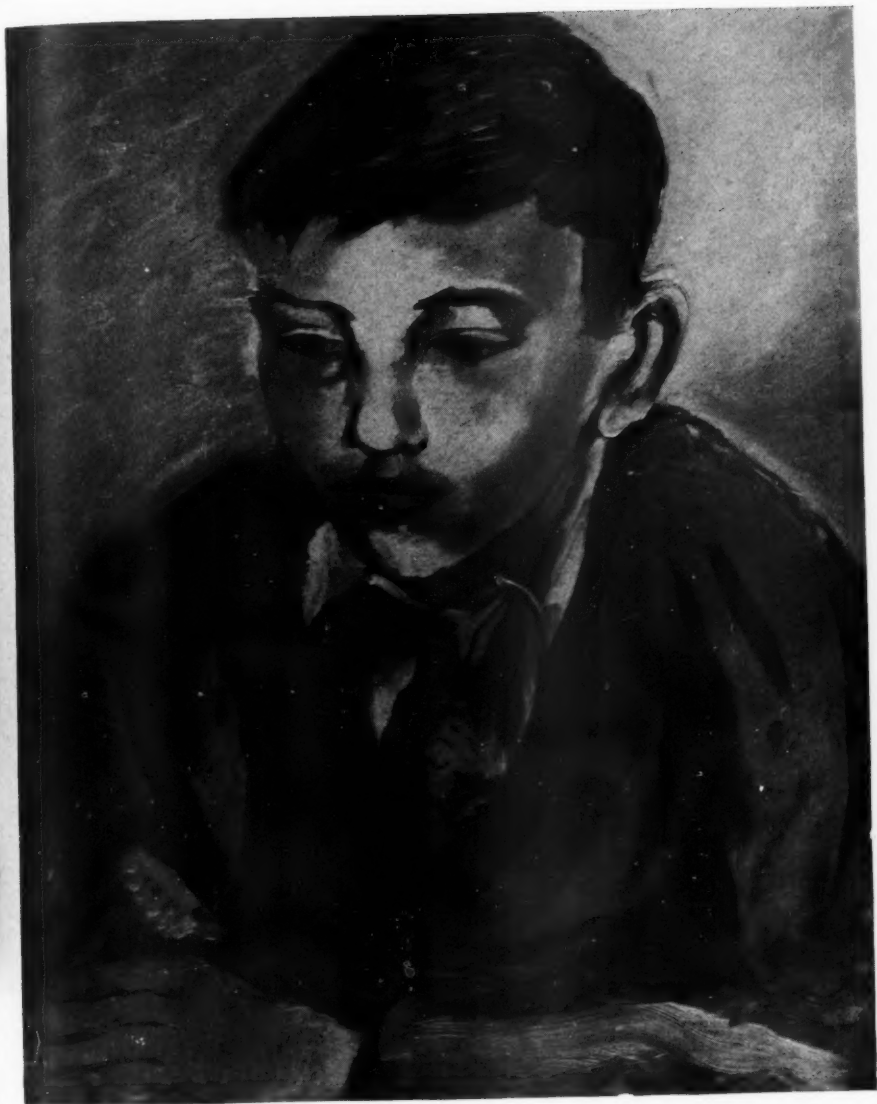
*Landscape, Farrelton*  
*Private collection*





HENRI MASSON. *Conte extraordinaire*. Collection: H. S. Southam, C.M.G.





HENRI MASSON. *Garçon en bleu.* Collection: H. S. Southam, C.M.G.

Masson, the metal engraver, in his spare time found mental comfort at the Ottawa Art Association in the neighbourhood. Here George Rowles taught the principles of academic art to members, most of them no longer young. Yet, as a temporary makeshift, this saved him at a critical moment. His younger companions in this Sparks Street studio—George Pepper, Nan Cheney and Pegi Nicol—responded more quickly than he did to uninspiring tuition. Perhaps he was too heavily trammelled by his everyday duties and a certain timidity that retarded his own evolution.

From 1934 on his activities with Le Caveau—organizing local exhibitions, giving lessons benevolently, exhibiting his own work—provided a much needed stimulus and brought him some recognition. The use of his first motor car helped, and he began to seek more varied themes out of town. In these excursions he was often associated with Wilfrid Flood, a skilled draughtsman and water colourist, working in the Department of Mines.

In 1936, he exhibited for the first time with the Ontario Society of Artists, *La Pluie*, an oil painting of rain-soaked pave-

ments, mirrored houses, a church and a cart of "French fries"—a touch of humour which is characteristic of so much of his work. The artist was surprised at the receipt of a flattering letter from Carl Schaefer. This event marked for him his entry into the fraternity of art.

In 1938, he drove with Tom Wood, another Ottawa artist, across the border to New England, travelled across country, stopped at the museums and visited the art colonies of Agonkwit, near Cape Cod, at Goose Rock. What impressed him most, in this pilgrimage, was the revolt then sweeping the younger American generation against the School of Paris that had furnished their initial training. The "American Scene" then was swiftly gaining ground. Why not, in Canada, the "Canadian Scene", wondered Masson and Wood, on their way back home.

Upon returning from New England, Masson launched headlong into his third phase, beginning in 1939. It centres in the painting *La Grande Inondation* at Gatineau Point, a picture which Mr. H. S. Southam, patron of the arts, purchased in 1943. Other canvases of the

*Continued on page 89*



HENRI MASSON. *Street Scene*. Water colour

# NEW PATTERNS IN INDUSTRY

BY E. W. THRIFT

THE continuing use of our industrial potential, so largely increased during the six years of war, depends on the export of a large part of our production. In order to export we must, of course, make the kind of products the world wants, fashioned in the manner the world desires. The ways in which this industrial potential may be exercised are several and varied: it can be directed toward the making of articles of mass production, largely in competition with the United States and Great Britain, in which field we cannot hope for too great success; it can produce goods solely for the Canadian market—a means of partial absorption; there can be co-operation between Canadian and foreign producers (probably those of the United States) whereby Canada would produce component parts of products for final assembly outside the country—a distinct economic possibility; there may be a type of Canadian production developed for both domestic and foreign consumption which, if unique in its character and utility and properly and adequately advertised, would create a positive demand.

This discussion deals particularly with those furnishings and equipment for homes that make living a more enjoyable, less burdened experience, and with the equipment of offices and factories that makes our work inside them less tiring and more efficient. Such a field can eventually absorb a large part of our industrial production and output of raw materials.

Until recent times too little competent attention has been given to the design of such objects for machine production. What happened fundamentally during the past century was that the arts which were largely involved with daily living and working—the arts of hand production and crafts, of good living, and of the

creation of better surroundings for living and working—lost their meaning and significance in men's lives. Only in the past few years have men begun to realize the full value of and to attain mastery of a new tool, the machine. And with the mastery of this tool comes a sensitivity to the product of the tool and an understanding of the effects of its production on the lives of men.

The design of manufactured products has been developed in recent years as a new art. Industrial design differs from the old hand methods whereby the maker shaped and controlled his form during production. In industry the creation of new forms is not in the hands of the machine operator who actually turns out the product but under the control of an individual who must determine before the machine ever turns a wheel what that machine shall do and how it shall do it. This is where the planning process enters the picture, for the product must be planned and the processes of which the machine is capable must be planned, and these two types of planning must be completely co-ordinated.

While industry may seek individuals who are competent industrial designers it will not be possible to pluck them ready-made from the classrooms of our art schools. A good industrial designer must have knowledge of machine production, of the psychology of colour and of the sales value of form and colour, as well as some knowledge of markets and marketing, over and above his ability as a creator. But wherever we find a broad artistic base in the community there we are more likely to find a body of talent from which will emerge those who will become the designers in industry.

We can no longer claim to be a frontier country where such refinements do not count. We have reached a stage in our



*Moulded plywood furniture designed by Eero Saarinen and Charles Eames. Winning designs in the competition "Organic Design" held in 1941 by the Museum of Modern Art, New York.*

development wherein we should gain a broader understanding of ourselves as a people, of our country, and of the significant contribution we can make to the civilization of the world. This is the sort of understanding that must keep pace with our technical capacities. It will be reflected in the goods we offer to the world.

Whilst an argument such as this may seem to be basically aesthetic, it is by no means entirely so. The purely economic benefits to be derived by those manufacturers and producers whose products may be improved through good design can be readily revealed by a glance at the balance sheets of those manufacturers in the United States who have emphasized competent design. Unless we are ready to do likewise we may discover with some concern and at some appreciable cost in a world of more open, competitive markets, that we should have taken more care with our products.

Canadian products can be truly Cana-

dian in character if we develop our full capabilities in understanding design. Our goods can become most desirable to our customers if they are forthrightly honest in their utility, in their uses of materials and in their application of production methods. They will reflect the basic laws of good design which have been the foundation of great creative work from ancient times—such laws as we see governing the form of Greek temples, Gothic cathedrals and modern aircraft. Their fundamental honesty will tend to give them a distinctly Canadian flavour, a characteristic that will make them even more desirable in the eyes of our customers. Certain instances of this exist in some parts of the world and have proven their economic value. From Sweden, for example, have come products of unquestionable artistic merit which found a ready market throughout the world. Some sections of the United States, notably California, have offered products cast in the character of the region, bear-

ing at the same time the unmistakable stamp of honest practicability.

A particular field in which our design fundamentals have been especially overlooked is that of the equipment and furnishings for our homes. Much of what we will produce may be for use in the homes of others. To be completely successful we should reach a better understanding of the situation than we have attained at present. Home furnishing is a most backward field in its lack of the use of modern technology. With the exception of kitchen and bathroom facilities, homes are generally furnished with copies of furniture styles that were developed anywhere from fifty to five hundred years ago.

Analysis shows that much of present day furniture is a perversion of those designs of other times. The net result is all too often a gaudy overstuffing. It has no saving grace in comfort or ease of upkeep, for such furniture is seldom designed with much consideration for the shape or comfort of the human body. I would heartily recommend T. H. Robsjohn-Gibbings' witty, yet thoroughly sincere little book "Good-bye Mr. Chippendale", published in New York by Alfred A. Knopf, which does much to open the problem to clear thinking.

As one writer has put it, we must be sure that we do not "walk backwards into the brave new world of tomorrow." A clarion call for freedom from the shackles of the past went almost unheeded back in 1899 when Louis Sullivan, often called the father of true American architecture, said in Chicago, "You are called upon not to betray but to express the life of your own day and generation . . . A fraudulent and corrupting use of historical documents, however suavely presented, however cleverly plagiarized, however neatly repacked, however shrewdly intrigued, will constitute and will be held to be a betrayal of trust . . . If you take the pains truly to understand your country, your people, your day, your generation; the time, the place, in which you live . . . you will be understood and sympathetically received in return." Only now, twenty years after his passing, men are awakening to the truths that he expressed and with that awakening we find a public that is awaiting the expression of that understanding in the products it buys for daily use.

We should not return to "business as usual", to copying the past or to perfunctory production of goods. As time moves on we must move with it, else be lost.

*Package Sealer  
designed by  
Egmont Arens*

*The Nashua Package  
Sealing Company,  
Nashua, New  
Hampshire*



## Research and Experiment

The shapes shown at the bottom of this page represent pilot models of various articles which have been constructed in the laboratories of the National Research Council in Ottawa. The large aircraft fuselages are of moulded plywood, which was the material used in the famous Mosquito bomber. Such complicated shapes can be executed exactly as the engineer designs them. This is made possible by new techniques in which synthetic resin adhesives and impregnants are combined under pressure and heat with light strong materials, such as plywood.

A special type of oven is used to accomplish this. A photograph of such an oven, or autoclave, is shown on the opposite page.

Initially, several layers of veneer are wrapped on a wood mould or form and held in position by stapling. The veneers are coated with synthetic resin and, together with the basic mould, enclosed in a flexible bag, generally referred to as an envelope. Suction is applied to the envelope and the air inside is exhausted. The external atmospheric pressure forces the veneers to assume the shape of the mould. The envelope is rolled into the autoclave; the air-tight door is closed and the steam turned on. The additional pressure exerted by the steam upon the veneers shapes them precisely to the mould, while the steam temperature sets the resin.

The alert manufacturer and imaginative designer can find many civilian uses, related to these new techniques. For example, here on the opposite page is a drawing by Canadian architects of an auditorium chair designed to take full

advantage of these new methods of construction. It is a chair which permits stacking, is light and strong. It can be easily made in this practical form because of the great strength which any suitable fibrous material acquires after being moulded under pressure with synthetic glues. The fibrous material in this instance is a cloth made of spun glass. In this way, a new form that has at once both monolithic and unconventional qualities is created by uniting the knowledge of the scientist with the skill of the industrial designer.

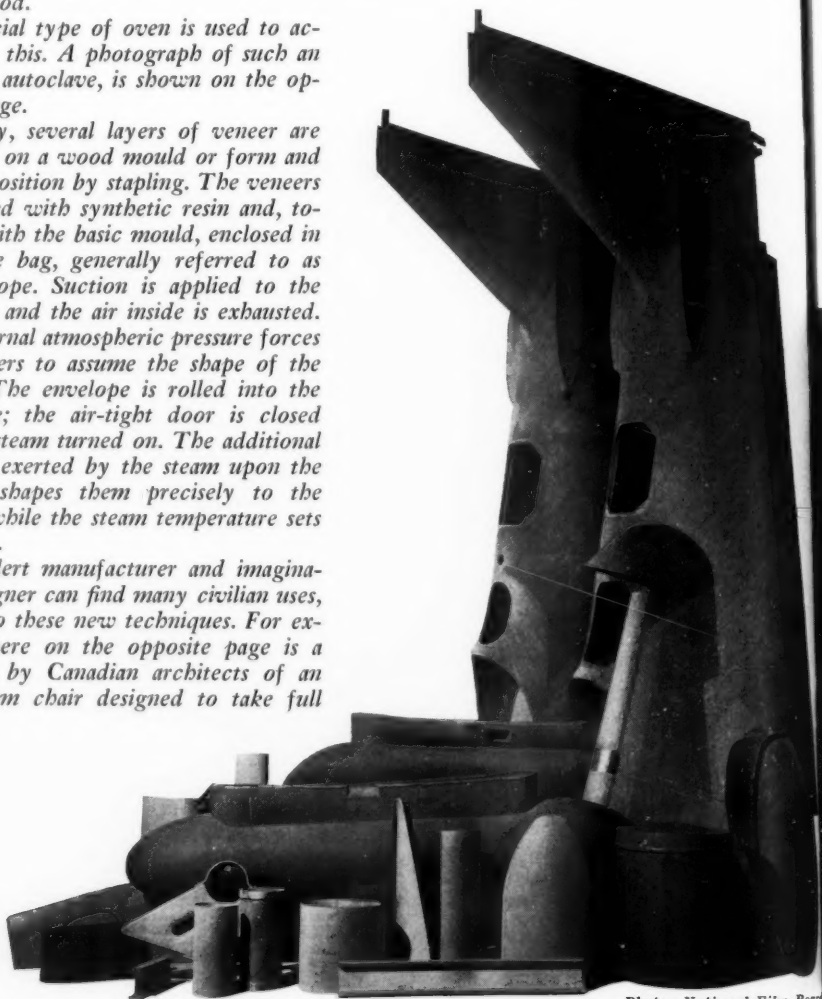


Photo: National Film Board



O U L D E D



*Design for  
auditorium chair  
by D. Simpson and  
J. Donahue of Ottawa*

*Below: Autoclave  
for baking moulded  
plywood and other  
fibrous materials*

*National Research  
Council, Ottawa*

F A B R I C

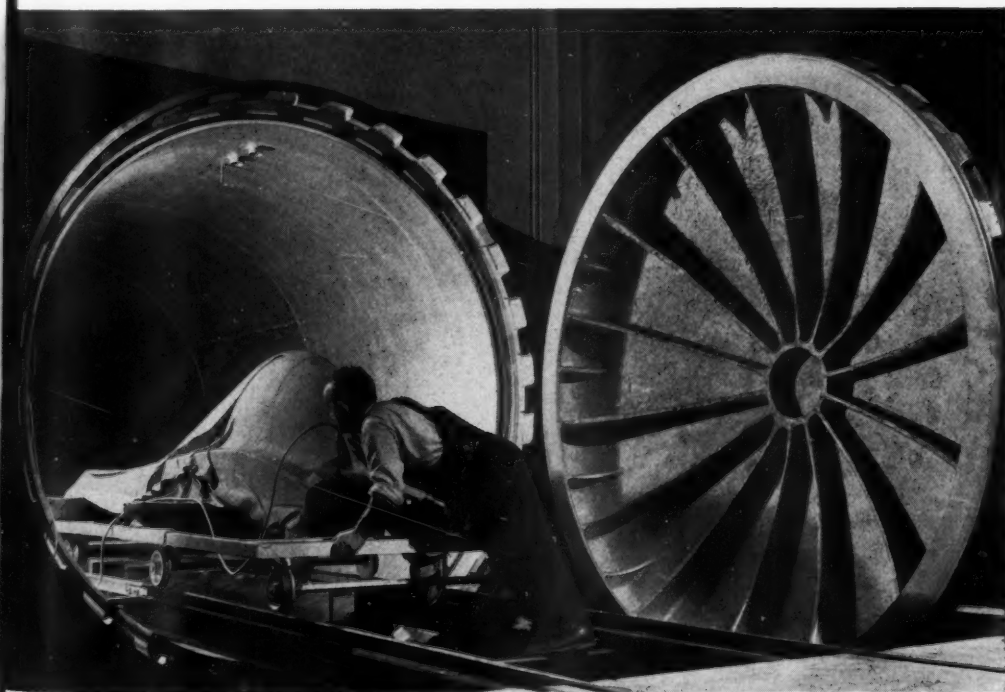


Photo: National Film Board

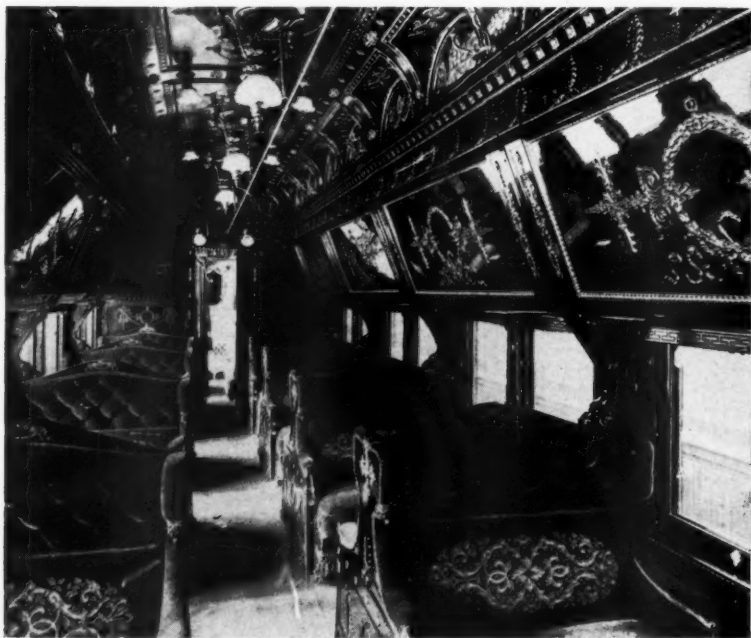


*Contemporary Café Car*

*Photos: Canadian National Railways*

## PROGRESS IN RAILWAY DESIGN

*Early Canadian Sleeping Car*



# DESIGN ON WHEELS

BY GEORGE F. DRUMMOND

**D**URING the war the railways were too busy to think much about replacement and the more modern refitting of passenger cars—in 1944 the Canadian National system, for example, carried almost twice as much freight and four times as many passengers as in 1939—and the thinking would have done them little good, for, with the shortage of both manpower and materials, it was impossible to get even an adequate supply of equipment; the few locomotives, box cars and refrigerator cars that were available could not be expected to meet the need; the railways had to put up with what they had and practise the greatest economy and ingenuity in its use. New passenger cars were out of the question, to say nothing of refinements. But now that the war is over, the railways are returning to their programs of modernization. When it is remembered that this program was begun during the twenty years between the wars, in a time split by the abyss of the depression, the advances in railway car design will seem all the more remarkable.

The advent of air-conditioning has possibly been the main single factor in changing the interior design of railway cars and, very shortly, new advances in that science will make further refinements possible. The system of air distribution, either cooled or warmed, becomes a functional factor in the design. When the entire ceiling of the car is treated as the warming or cooling source it becomes the dominating factor; it must of necessity be low and the side walls have little value as focal points. Yet air-conditioning has changed them, too. The windows must be hermetically sealed. They thus can be made wider and on one plane. With dust and cinders virtually shut out of the car, other innovations become possible, such as lighter painted surfaces and chair and

seat coverings of more attractive shades and patterns.

Air-conditioning systems have introduced another factor of great importance and this is the added weight that must be hauled by motive power. In an ice-activated system, which is the most economical for our particular conditions, the weight of ice-boxes under the car, batteries, motors and the various gadgets amounts to considerable poundage. In new equipment this may be offset to some extent by the use of lighter structural steel developed in recent years, but the fact is that interior finish has now to contribute its share to weight reduction, limiting the choice of materials which one otherwise would wish to use.

In the interior design of a compact and intimate room such as the passenger car, artificial lighting becomes important, if for no other reason than that there must be so much of it. When one considers that there are sixty or seventy passengers in a car roughly seventy feet long by nine feet wide and that each individual must have adequate illumination for reading, the influence of this factor on the design is evident. Air-cooling apparatus also adds to the power load and the combined demands on the generating equipment increase the difficulties of the designer. It should be understood also that the power generated by the train in motion is thirty-two volts and of such a limited quantity that the design of fixtures and the adequacy of illumination are restricted.

Apart from weight and lighting, other limitations face the designer of car interiors which do not apply to building design. The most important of these is the fact that the car is built to move and to move frequently at high speed. It is thus subject to stresses, non-existent or practically so, in buildings, such as swaying and weaving. The effect of construc-



tion on design is obvious in all structures but nowhere more so than in the interiors of cars.

Turning from buildings to railway cars, the designer finds, too, that scale is liable to play tricks. Remember, the maximum height available is at most eight feet, the width less than nine, while the length may go as far as seventy feet. In a coach, the width of the aisle between seat arms is twenty-eight inches, the entrance door generally measures the same, while interior doors are about twenty-four inches wide by six feet six inches high. To be successful, the handling of scale and proportion must be carefully studied with these dimensions in view and with as little sacrifice to the comfort of the passengers as possible, particularly in regard to furniture.

Another limitation in design of the utmost importance is the selection of materials. No structure is subject to more continuous and severe usage (and sometimes abuse) than a railway car. If a car cannot stand punishment, the result is failure, no matter how good the design. This is especially true of day coaches and the railway architect finds it no easy

problem to achieve a satisfactory design solution and produce a result which will retain its appearance and remain intact under rigorous treatment. He must also consider the problems of the safety and security of all parts of the equipment. In other words, everything must be fool-proof. Public carriers are fair game when responsibility for accidents is a matter for argument.

The type of post-war passenger equipment which the railways will build no doubt will be influenced by the return to the highways of private automobiles and buses, an increase in air travel and a general reaction to the crowding of railways during the war years, when it was necessary to discourage avoidable journeys. As far as the Canadian National is concerned, the design of its Central Station in Montreal, and the response of both European and American critics, as well as the public generally to it, gives us reason to believe that the contemporary approach adopted by this system is the proper one. It is being carried out in the smaller stations as well, and in the newer car designs. The point of view is that of making all facilities more attractive to the travelling public than they were before the war.

The tendency we may expect in planning will be a reduction in the seating capacity of day coaches, with more emphasis on spaciousness and comfort. Toilet and dressing room facilities will be improved and allotted more room, with greater comfort for seats and lounges. Wider vision windows will be possible in the new cars and improvement in air-conditioning equipment will permit a greater flexibility of interior treatment. Lighting is also being studied and the newer types will combine, in the coaches, increased intensity of illumination, directed at the reading plane, with sufficient general illumination to reduce eye strain because of glare and shadows. In sleeping cars, the trend is towards more privacy.

Materials developed during the war and now becoming available are care-

fully studied and used in the more recent construction. Positive adhesives, as used in aircraft construction, will be of great value to the railways in interiors where partitions and walls must be of minimum thickness to conserve space and of sufficient strength to withstand stresses. Plywoods, plastics and prefinished wallboards of various types may enable the car designer to combine his interior structure and his finish in one material. The light-weight metals and alloys will also be extensively used in the way of trim and fittings and new, permanent finishes applied to metals are now being used. Washable plastic fabrics should rid us of some of the worries old-time upholstery caused us. The development of unbreakable or shatterproof glass is increasing the use of glass as a decorative and structural material and we may look for more glass in our new cars. Fluorescent lighting, in spite of unsuitable power characteristics, has been introduced but on account of the small-scale interiors and the high intensity of the light, the first efforts are not too success-

ful. It will be better when used in conjunction with plastics and experiments along these lines are now being carried out.

The designers confer with passenger traffic officers, who are able to advise them of travel trends and of the wishes of the public, with operating officers and with car-builders. Hundreds of drawings have to be made and the interior model or mock-up has to be built, studied, altered and approved before the builders are given the blueprints and authority to proceed.

Generally speaking, what the designer of railway car interiors works towards today is simplicity in detail and in use of materials of easy maintenance value; the use of light or bleached hardwoods and painted surfaces, in contrast with the heavy mahogany and oak of the gas-light era; streamlining without its early eccentricities; direct approach to design without overworked functionalism, and the proper and sensible use of new materials depending on good proportion and colour, rather than applied decoration.

*A corner of a  
modern buffet  
sleeping car*

*Opposite: Another  
view looking  
down the aisle  
of the same car*



*Photos: Canadian National Railways*

# CANADIAN GROUP OF PAINTERS

BY GRAHAM McINNES

THE biennial exhibition of the Canadian Group of Painters, which opened on November 23rd at the Art Gallery of Toronto, strengthens the conviction that leadership in Canadian painting is definitely passing from Toronto to Montreal. It is not merely that the curse of the amateur hangs heavy upon the Canadian Group, for it has always counted among its number many whose enthusiasm and goodwill outran their talent and conviction as painters. It is not merely that the Montreal artists seem to have a richer understanding of the plastic qualities of paint. It is that what used to be so notable a feature of Group painting—a sturdy regionalism whose gusto and sincerity outweighed any painterly defects—is lacking. The show is beaten on its own terms; and it is a curious fact that, apart from a few outstanding landscapes by seasoned painters like Jackson, Paraskeva Clark, Yvonne Housser and Peter Haworth, the main interest of the show rests in the fields of reportage and abstraction.

In what might be called the documentary section, Charles Comfort's battered Italian landscape is outstanding. So are Carl Schaefer's Lancasters and Jack Nichols' canvas of rescue work at sea. They are all wrought of the stuff of experience. Even in the field of illustration the paintings of York Wilson and William Winter achieve a certain timeless quality one normally expects to find only in a painter like Hopper.

The abstractions (there is a whole room of them) contain much that is none the worse for being derivative; and there are among them those that, in addition to being well painted, bear the stamp of originality: the suave patterns

of Marian Scott, the bold emotional simplicity of Edna Tacon, the meticulous Freudian statements of Bertram Brooker and the tranquil and occasionally majestic celebrations of Lawren Harris.

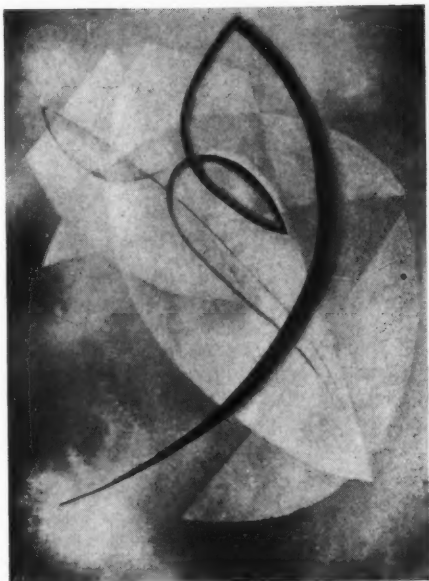
Pegi Nicol, who herself contributes two superbly messy and one supremely complex and joyful canvas, once wrote (and unfortunately it is many years ago) an article about the Group in the *Canadian Forum*, in which she mourned, "Where are the passionate snows of yesteryear?" Where indeed? In the present showing one must sadly admit that the Group is in a rut. It is, of course, a superior rut. It is not the deep trough plowed these ten years by the O.S.A., nor these fifty by the Academy; but it is a rut none the less. The reason for this is plain. Unless you are a truly great artist, you tend to continue, as you mature, on the momentum generated by your youthful enthusiasms. In growing old as a Group, and as individuals, many of the members have simply not developed. Nor have they admitted much young blood.

Montreal today boasts a dozen first class or extraordinarily vital painters: Roberts, Borduas, de Tonnancour, Surrey, Pellan, Scott, Brandtner, Gauvreau, Muhlstock, Harrison, Lyman, and no one knows how many youngsters coming up from the Beaux-Arts and other places. It is not the purpose of this review to make a comparison, but the fact remains that what the Canadian Group tried to do, to broaden the basis of the old Group of Seven's work, was completed by about 1938, and since then it has been coasting. As a result it



"... the main interest of the show rests in the fields of reportage and abstraction."

EDNA TACON  
*Tonal Poem, 1945*



would be literally impossible to pick a team that would compare, not only in painterly qualities but in regional strength expressed through paint, with the Montrealers. In the present show, the lads and lasses from Ville Marie—notably

Roberts, Brandtner and Scott—walk off with most of the nickels from the jackpot. Much of the balance looks too much like the ghost of the Seven sitting crowned on the grave thereof to be really comfortable.



WILLIAM A. WINTER  
*Midnite at Charlie's*

# THE ARCHIBALD PRIZE FIGHT

BY RALPH WARNER

MANY years ago, J. F. Archibald died and left provision in his will for an art prize of five hundred pounds to be given annually to encourage the development of portrait painting in Australia. This was in those delightful days when art was a simple matter. An artist was judged by his ability to reproduce, faithfully and sometimes slavishly, the features of the sitter—always, of course, being careful to portray the subject in an attractive or flattering manner. For many years art in Australia remained smugly competent and complacent. Then it gradually became evident that something was happening. Some of the younger artists had been so foolish as to think for themselves or to go abroad to study and had obviously become contaminated, had absorbed dangerous and outrageous doctrines, and the solid and timeless foundations of decent art were being attacked and were in danger of being weakened.

The first sign of bad sportsmanship was a protest a few years ago against the winning portrait by Bill Dargie, an official war artist. His portrait was of an Australian V.C. winner and it was painted in the Middle East in the course of Dargie's duties. The protest was that "the prize was for a portrait painted by an Australian resident in Australia", a wise provision of the will, but obviously not intended to cover a case such as this. Dargie had certainly not lost his Australian citizenship by serving in uniform overseas—this protest didn't get far, but apparently the seed had been sown and William Dobell was to reap the results in a few years' time.

For the past few years Dobell had been painting quietly and studiously and sending in portraits for the Archibald Prize—portraits which attempted more than just a likeness of the sitter. In fact, Dobell was obviously little concerned with

camera likeness, for he preferred to paint from small thumbnail notes or from strong mental impressions vividly remembered, summing up the subject's personality, mental state or what have you, and rendering this mental impression in exciting qualities of paint and colour.

Came the Archibald Prize of 1944 and to the horror of the reactionaries and the joy of the press, Dobell won the prize with his portrait of Josh Smith, a fellow artist. The press fairly yelped with excitement, published photos of the portrait alongside photos of Joshua, photos of Dobell, photos of past prizewinning portraits and generally whipped up excitement to a fever pitch. Finally two competitors, Mary Edwards and Joseph Wolinski, really set the seal on the pro-



*A photograph of Joshua Smith about whose portrait by William Dobell the controversy centred.*

ceedings by calling protest meetings in Sydney with subsidiary protest meetings in other capitals. Some very sulphurous resolutions were passed and much money was subscribed to fight this pernicious influence in Australian art. The die was cast and the fight was on.

At the Sydney Art Gallery where the collection of entries was hung, many strange sights were seen. There was an all-time record for visitors and on Sundays a tremendous line formed awaiting the opening hour. One would have thought it was free beer and cigarettes. Not that this means anything, an equally large crowd gathers for a brawl, but it does show the general excitement caused.

Finally after many false alarms and delays, the case reached the courts. It was heard in the Equity Court, Sydney, Australia, in October, 1944, before a crowded house of artists of the sandal and spindly beard variety and hordes of society women. Crowds sat outside the court all day. Mary Edwards and Joseph Wolinski, who, through the Attorney General of New South Wales, asked for

an order restraining the Art Gallery of New South Wales from handing to Dobell the five hundred pounds award, were in court but did not take the stand. The basis for the case was that the winning entry was not a portrait within the meaning of the terms of the will. Mr. G. Barwick, K.C., for the plaintiffs made the point that "at the time J. F. Archibald was living there has been no disturbance of the traditional form of portraiture, so portrait must be used in the sense that it had as Mr. Archibald always knew it". So! Mr. Archibald was to hamstring Australian art because he knew nothing of art as it might develop! Really this would seem too much, but worse was to come. James McDonald for the plaintiffs said that the last portrait painter was Sir Thomas Lawrence who died in 1832. Since then there had been no good portraitists. Cross examined he was asked if he considered his opinion sounder than Ruskin's—answer yes.

Dobell, although under no obligation to give evidence, did so for one whole day under conditions of considerable strain and handled the whole affair very intelligently. He said in answer to one question, "I painted him as he appeared to me and with the license that an artist can claim." Mr. F. A. Dwyer, K.C., for Dobell in concluding said that the action was a blot on Australian art—"this childish litigation has been conceived in jealousy and born in spite." That would seem to be a fairly accurate summing up. After four days of wrangling, Mr. Justice Roper reserved his judgment after a brush with Dwyer, K.C., for Dobell. Mr. Justice Roper said, "I have to decide whether this originated in petty spite or in a high-souled attempt to maintain the standard of Australian art."

A few days later the judgment was delivered, Mr. Justice Roper ruling as follows: "In my opinion the evidence is overwhelming that there were grounds for forming the intelligent opinion that



*The portrait of Joshua Smith by William Dobell which won the Archibald Prize.*

the Dobell painting was a portrait. The picture is characterized by some startling exaggeration and distortion clearly intended by the artist, his technique being too brilliant to admit any other conclusion. It bears, nevertheless, a strong degree of likeness to the subject and is, I think, undoubtedly a pictorial representation of him."

This was an unmistakable triumph for Dobell and a reassuring decision for every thinking Australian. There the matter ended with the plaintiffs faced with costs of approximately fifteen hundred pounds and Dobell faced with the

attempts of society women to lionize him.

Or so it seemed to end, but not until the plaintiffs made one last attempt to appeal to a higher court. This appeal was discontinued on the grounds of lack of general public importance by an order of the Attorney General, given in 1945. Mr. Wolinski, however, still attempted to have the last word. He said, in a newspaper interview, that although the judge had upheld the award, the publicity given to the case had at least directed attention to the insidious tendencies gaining ground among art critics!

## PAINTINGS FOR HIRE

BY DONALD W. BUCHANAN

**F**ORGET about sitting back and waiting for the public to come to you. Go yourself to the public with your paintings. Well, to that advice, the artist usually answers that it may be good salesmanship but not exactly his cup of tea. He doesn't want to be mixed up too deeply in this game of soliciting clients, to the detriment of his more creative job in hand.

The artists in Ottawa, however, with a little organization have discovered a suitable way out of this dilemma. Without losing their individual freedom, they have allied themselves in a co-operative way with commerce. This is the story of how they did it.

When a branch of the Federation of Canadian Artists was formed in that city, the members set out to promote some activity by which they could link themselves to the community. A picture loan society was suggested. This was met with expressions of doubt. It had been tried before; there were too many traps and pitfalls; difficulties, like provision of quarters, pay of a secretary, advertising and insurance were insurmountable, or so the old hands said.

But enthusiasm carried the day. A committee was formed to approach de-

partment stores and to ask them whether one of them would open a picture gallery. After some discussion, the firm of Murphy-Gamble Limited on Sparks Street in the shopping centre of the city agreed. Their advertising manager at once saw the prestige value of this cultural innovation; one says innovation for in Ottawa there had been lacking for many years any sales gallery, stocked with representative modern pictures.

The resulting contract between the Federation and the store, as negotiated for the Federation by Henri Masson, on behalf of the Ottawa Branch, was one of reciprocity and mutual advantage. The Federation found the paintings, organized the rental arrangements, helped to hang the initial exhibition. The store paid for the services of a suitable sales director and provided the floor space. The layout of the gallery in turn was designed with the help of the artists.

Finances are handled as in most commercial exhibitions. When canvases and water colours are sold, the store takes a thirty per cent commission, and a similar commission on rentals.

For the opening exhibition a high standard of quality was set. Several dozen of the most interesting contemporary

artists in Canada were asked to participate. Also, the Picture Loan Society of Toronto and its director, Douglas Duncan, gave valuable advice and the loan of some of their water colours and canvases.

The purpose of the gallery was twofold. It was formed to bring the best of modern Canadian art to the attention of the Ottawa public, and secondly, to give all Ottawa artists aspiring to originality a chance to exhibit their paintings. Through newspaper notices and other channels, every effort was made to draw in as many local entries as possible. A jury consisting of Charles Comfort, Lawren Harris, Jr., and Walter Herbert of the Canada Foundation, passed upon the Ottawa entries, of which so many came and so many were accepted that the committee organizing the gallery decided that a special section should be set aside for them. In this way, on the opening night, it was possible to hang about seventy entries from Ottawa as well as about seventy items which had been sent in, upon invitation, by artists in other cities.

From the opening night onwards paintings immediately began to sell and to rent. Within five days, ten had been

purchased and over thirty were out on loan. That total of thirty incidentally meant much to the Federation of Canadian Artists, for in order to be eligible for rental privileges, one had to join the Federation.

The only drawback was an unexpected one. The question was, not how to attract the public, but how to attract a steady flow of good paintings into the gallery to replace those being so rapidly rented or purchased.

This was and remains a task to which the organizers have constantly to apply themselves. It is made particularly difficult because there are always a few good painters who do not want to rent. They send their canvases marked "for sale only." It takes some persuasion before these artists grasp the publicity value of the picture loan principle. After all a picture on loan is not out of circulation. While it is no longer on the walls of the gallery, yet it is still on exhibition, although in a different way. New circles of the public now see it on the walls of the home to which it has gone, and these people in turn are attracted to visit the gallery themselves and perhaps to become future purchasers.

*"The layout of the gallery . . . was designed with the help of the artists"*



Photo: Courtesy Murphy-Gamble Limited



## COAST TO COAST IN ART

JOHN LYMAN

*Laurentian Landscape*

### ***British Columbia at Work***

Aimed, as are all its activities, at producing closer understanding and co-operation between labour, art and the community, the Labor Arts Guild opened its second annual competitive art exhibition "British Columbia at Work" at the Vancouver Art Gallery last November. The fact that trade unions in the province contributed 600 dollars in prize money and that a large proportion of the exhibitors are members of trade unions, are but two tangible indications that such an aim can be realized. All entries, and there were nearly twice as many this time, dealt with some aspect of working life in British Columbia. Subjects range from delivering milk and haying to ship building and lumbering. Besides the dignity and recognition given to the role of labour and industry in this province, this focussing of the artist's attention on a specific theme apparently had artistic justification as well, for this exhibition is incomparably superior in quality to the "British Columbia Annual", also a non-jury show presented earlier at the Gallery. A number of really fine works were included on both amateur and professional levels; and quality is, after all, the only final justification for any art exhibition. Notably weak was the sculpture section.

### ***A Laurentian Enlargement***

Enlargements of Canadian paintings, adapted for prestige purposes by large commercial firms, have appeared once or twice already on billboards. It was left to the Pepsi-Cola Company of Canada however to take this idea a step further and make a really dominating display.

A few months ago, they had a large scale version of a Laurentian landscape by John Lyman (see illustrations) prepared and placed on top of a building facing Phillips Square in Montreal. This interesting initiative, it is hoped, the corporation will follow up in other ways, even to the extent perhaps of going in for the same support of contemporary painting as has been done by its parent company in New York.

### ***Cited for Community Service***

Four Junior Leagues have been cited by the Board of Directors of the Association of the Junior Leagues of America for "outstanding achievement in initiating significant community services."

The Leagues cited were Pelham, New York; Winston-Salem, North Carolina; Fort Worth, Texas; and Hamilton, Ontario.

Officers and directors of the Association representing all regions in the United



States and Canada joined in the unanimous selection of the four Leagues. This marked a new departure for the Association in presenting citations for the first time. They will be given again in 1946.

The citation for Hamilton read: "For significant contribution to the post-war plan for Hamilton's development. Example: By making and publishing a survey of the community's cultural facilities and needs, based on the Association of the Junior Leagues of America outline *Arts and Our Town*. The study was carried on by a representative community committee and the volunteer service of 75% of the Hamilton League members who, at the same time, carried on war jobs and other community services. The survey provided the basis for a year's education program for the entire membership to promote more intelligent citizen participation in the community developments in the cultural field. The much needed data was supplied to 'Town Planners, Ltd.' charged with drawing up the master plan for the city's expansion."

Hamilton is one of six Junior Leagues in Canada. There are one hundred and fifty-eight in the United States, Mexico and Hawaii, all doing extensive community work.

### **Students Rent Paintings**

The University of British Columbia is sponsoring an Art Loan Collection for students. The collection, consisting of works by a number of British Columbia artists, was exhibited at the University Library for one week before the loan service began. The idea of picture loan societies, involving mutual benefit to public and artist, is not new. In acquainting students, by means of inexpensive loans, with the work of Canadian artists an important buying public is fostered for the future. The project has been accepted enthusiastically; all the pictures submitted were rented shortly after the conclusion of the initial exhibition.

### **Design in the Home**

With a view to improving the standard of equipment for daily living the Art Gallery of Toronto opened in January an exhibition of industrial design in its relation to the house.

Examples of all kinds of articles for household use, textiles and decorative materials which are now or soon will be available for the general public are included. The exhibition examines the fundamentals of good industrial design, and deals with the important role of experiment in this field.



*The enlargement of the painting, "Laurientian Landscape", by John Lyman as it appeared when installed in Phillips Square, Montreal.*

### **Federation Notes: Quebec Region**

Professor A. H. S. Gillson, Vice Principal of McGill University, in charge of Dawson College, has been elected chairman of the Federation of Canadian Artists, Quebec Region. The other members of the new executive are: Avis Fyshe, secretary; Louise Barette, treasurer; Robert Ayre, past chairman; Doris Hedges, Louis Muhlstock, Gordon Webber, Harry Mayerovitch and Fritz Brandtner.

A committee under the convenorship of Allan Harrison is responsible for arrangements for bringing art to the paraplegic patients in St. Anne's Military Hospital. The enthusiasm of the members was stimulated by a meeting addressed by various members of the hospital staff. Federation members now make regular visits to the hospital to assist in the restoration of the men paralysed in the war.

J. MacKinnon-Pearson, who, with his wife, organized the St. Hilaire and District Handicraft Guild in 1941, gave a talk on the development of the Guild at one of the studio meetings and brought samples of rugs, weaving, vegetable-dyed wool, needlework, toys and wood-carving. He asked the support of the Federation in establishing a community house as part of the community centres scheme.

### **Publicity for Community Centres**

In collaboration with the "Art in Living Group" of the Federation of Canadian Artists, the Labor Arts Guild of Vancouver has sponsored a Community Centres Rally. The purpose of this rally was to stimulate interest in Community Centres as war memorials, and to emphasize their relationship to such other civic issues as improved housing, recreational pursuits, cultural expansion, modernized schools, town planning and better living in general, with accent on the role of the artist. Featured were documentaries from the National Film Board, architectural models and exhibits, including the display from the National Gallery "What an Art Centre can do for your Community".

### **Franklin Carmichael**

In the recent death of Franklin Carmichael, R.C.A., Canada has lost one of her best known art instructors. One of the original members of the Group of Seven, he was appointed to the staff of the Royal Ontario College of Art in 1932 and continued to teach there until his death. His paintings are to be found in many Canadian collections, both public and private.



*A new interest in Emily Carr's earlier paintings, including those of her French period, has been growing since the various recent exhibitions of her work. These include the Memorial Exhibition which is touring Canada and those held at the Dominion Gallery, Montreal, and the T. Eaton Fine Art Galleries, Toronto.*

## NEW BOOKS ON THE ARTS

AN ARTIST SEES ALASKA. By *Henry Varnum Poor*. 279 pp. Illustrated. Toronto: Macmillan Co. of Canada Ltd. \$4.50.

From among the increasing number of books pertaining to the war written and illustrated by American war artists, Canadians and especially Canadian painters will reach most readily for Henry Varnum Poor's contribution.

Written in the nature of a diary, this book resembles others written by war artists in that it recounts personal trials and triumphs and so presents only a small picture of the Alaska experience. There is no question as to the validity of the experience, but given the possibilities of the material one is disappointed that an artist of Poor's stature has not created something much larger with it.

However, it is in the illustrations that an insight into the Alaska scene may rightfully be sought, but here again the total impact is less than it might have been. His line drawings have the casual charm of the slight sketches one makes in a letter to a friend, to be enjoyed at most by a small circle of intimates—and not to be exposed for public consideration.

There are those who reach their maximum artistic intensity in vignettes and thumb-nail sketches and are incapable of deeper and more enduring work, but past performance definitely removes Varnum Poor from this category, and it is because of the promise of his ability that this present work seems undigested. An artist has no business with second best and these line drawings are hardly worthy of a craftsman of Poor's standing. To draw a parallel; in any similar work undertaken by say Thoreau MacDonald or A. Y. Jackson every smallest drawing would show mature deliberation.

The handful of half-tones are of the same light character, except for what is by far the best thing in the book, the head of Willis Syngyke, of remarkable insight, where the country is revealed in the character of the man.

On the question of the function of a war artist Poor's decisions are sound. Our Canadian war artists will appreciate the difficulties of aiming steadfastly at their objective when confused by everyday distractions; and, it is not unnatural that when the War Department underwrites an artist's explorations, he feels he must give them in return a sufficient volume of drawings of G.I.'s, Quonset huts and churned roads, hoping that the uniformed mind will not detect their level of dullness and that he may then be left free to attack the real problems.

We look forward to seeing Henry Varnum Poor's final synthesis of his experience.

M.E.

PAUL LAMBERT DIT SAINT PAUL. By *Gérard Morisset*. 103 pp.; 32 plates. Québec-Montreal: Collection Champlain.

This little book (in French) by Gérard Morisset, of The Royal Society of Canada, secretary of the "Grand Prix de Peinture" of the secretariat of the Province of Quebec, and author of a book on François Ravelloz and of other works on Quebec art, is indispensable to anyone who is interested in native silver. Though he was forgotten for years, Paul Lambert dit Saint Paul was one of the most important figures in early Canadian art—if we don't, as M. Morisset suggests we shouldn't, limit our idea of art to painting and sculpture. Born in France, toward the end of the seventeenth century or the opening of the eighteenth, he was, like all our earliest silversmiths, formed in France. By the excellence, the character and the number of his works, says the biographer, he symbolized the spirit and vivacity of France and led the way for Ravelloz, the most exclusively Canadian of the silversmiths. M. Morisset has unearthed new material to add to the meagre facts we have on Lambert's life and he gives a good account not only of his domestic and church silver but of the context of society in New France. The plates show how handsome his silver is.

R.A.

WATER COLOR PAINTING. By *Adolf Dehn*. 80 pp. New York and London: The Studio Publications Ltd. \$2.50.

I recall Allen Tucker saying to a group of students some years ago, "Art cannot be taught, it must be learned." This pithy truism is often overlooked, possibly more so by those who set out to teach art than by those who seek instruction. Mr. Tucker never underestimated the value of personal contact with an informed teacher, but he did fasten the onus squarely on the student for the final success of his effort. Much that can be learned about the techniques of painting may be arrived at through the study of the paintings themselves, by the reading of books, and by constant and diligent practice. Of the books that are available on the subject, none are of greater value to the student of methods than those written by artists themselves about their work.

Adolf Dehn, the prolific water colourist of the American Middle-West has written a concise little volume describing in meticulous detail his method of arriving at his astonishing results. He describes the materials and equipment employed, his method of mounting paper, the progressive staging of his washes, in fact every move he makes from first to last in painting a water colour. The text is packed

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## NORTHERN REVIEW

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with ingenious legerdemain such as the lifting of sky washes with the aid of damp paper tissues in order to create cloud forms. A neat and clever procedure, no doubt, but one which limits the employment of cloud forms as an element in the design structure of a landscape. The book is not a comparative study, it is an exposition of an individual technique. True it does incorporate notes on the methods of such great Americans as Marin, Burchfield, Grosz, and Marsh, but they are very brief notes indeed. The value of this book is that it does outline the procedure employed by one of the leading exponents of the medium in the United States. It is packed with information, crowded with helpful plates, and filled with Mr. Dehn's "know-how" of water colour painting. Written primarily to assist students, it is not without interest to the accomplished painter.

CHARLES COMFORT.

**PASTEL PAINTING.** By Gladys Rockmore Davis. 80 pp. New York and London: The Studio Publications Ltd. \$2.50.

The Studio Publications Inc., has added to its collection of books on techniques, this one on *Pastel Painting*. There are three delightful colour reproductions, two of the author's, one by Odilon Redon, and twenty-five black and white reproductions from Tiepolo to Mary Cassatt.

Ten pages of reproductions of Mrs. Davis' work in black and white without analysis, are well worth looking at, but teach us *nothing*. As she herself very modestly says, "The selection of my pastels (sixteen to be exact) on these and other pages I leave for your own analysis." There is no mention of other contemporary American painters working in this medium. In other words, one has the feeling when glancing at this book that pastel painting or chalk drawing beginning with Guido Reni ended with Mary Cassatt and was taken up again by Mrs. Davis. How about the contemporary French? Have they given up working in this wonderful medium?

In her notes on material and on the actual execution of a portrait, there are paragraphs on pastel chalks, fixing, framing, paper, making changes, how to keep a child's interest, arranging equipment, drawing the outline, application of colour, background and finishing a pastel. In all there isn't a single helpful hint for artist or student. If anything, there is a tendency to discourage rather than encourage the use of pastels. The author tells that the colours cannot be mixed before applying as in oil and that one is immediately dependent upon the variety contained in one's collection. Immediately then there are limitations. One colour is *roughly* similar to the shadow flesh tones, the next is an *approximate* colour for the middle flesh tones. And now that a tonal effect has been

established more is done and the portrait is completed. But wait. The artist must now decide whether he wants a dark or light background. "If the background is to be dark, he is wise to establish both colour and value at the same time." If light? Nothing is said. What nonsense! And now for the very final stages one is handicapped by the lack of available rich dark colours. In which case the artist must use the next best the dealer decided to put in the assorted box or refer to page 37 and see how Mrs. Davis found a way out. "If red as brilliant as alizarin crimson in oil is not found, create an illusion of depth and power which the medium itself does not possess." She admits that the actual finishing of a pastel is so entirely personal that it is almost impossible to discuss this point with any clarity.

That Mrs. Davis knows how to use her pastels is obvious from the reproductions and her lack of ability to express it in words is also obvious from the text.

LOUIS MUHLSTOCK.

**GEORGES ROUAULT: PAINTINGS AND PRINTS.** By James Thrall Soby. New York: Museum of Modern Art. 132 pp. \$3.00.

"It is not the worldly eclecticism of multiple knowledge that enriches, but perseverance in a favourable furrow and the loving, silent effort of a whole life." One might not accept this as a general truth for all artists, but how well Rouault's statement applies to his own work. His pictures are examined in vain for the intellectualist qualities of Picasso or Matisse, names with which his is frequently linked as one of the three greatest living artists; or for the humour of Daumier, with whom Rouault shares a capacity for sharp commentary on social maladies. No, his furrow is not broad, but it is deep in emotion, as deep as the passion of an intensely felt religious conviction can score it. It might be observed that in Canada, whatever positive values our art possesses, an absence is felt of artists who feel passionately about themes of deep social significance.

Mr. Soby quotes the statement: "his pictures seem to have been reserved for a generation that is capable of a tragic vision". Rouault's painting is undoubtedly becoming increasingly recognized as a most striking expression of the hopes and evils of these times. But although this psychological conformity with the present may account partly for his general acclaim, it does not of itself constitute his greatness as an artist. His pictures are rarely pleasant; composition is large and simple, colour dramatic and often harsh, line that never defines as

analytically as expressively, a picture plane limited so to the surface of the canvas that the impact of forms is immediate and powerful. But what is felt in these pictures is that Rouault's reaction to the misery of a clown, the pathos of a Christ or the cold justice of an avaricious judge is expressed, in his best moments, with sensibility and imagination in a highly personal form that is its perfect embodiment.

An artist of Rouault's stature deserves serious and careful treatment; this book is no disappointment. Completely conceived and well produced, it contains first a fine article on Rouault's artistic development by James Thrall Soby. It deals with the influence on Rouault of his teacher, Gustave Moreau, and of Leon Bloy, the nineteenth century Catholic writer. It outlines his association with *Les Fauves* of 1905, and traces his development through the war years up to the present. There is also an article concerning the technique of Rouault's prints by Carl O. Schniewind. The rest of the book consists of numerous black and white reproductions of Rouault's work arranged in chronological order and three excellent colour plates. There are the usual complete notes, bibliography and catalogue. No library, public or private, that concerns itself with contemporary art, will be complete without this book.

D.S.



### Beautiful Art Books

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# THE ART FORUM

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sirs:

One of the commonplaces of the history of art in Canada is that until about the second decade of this century painters saw our landscape through French or English eyes. Then there appeared a small group of artists, comprised of men like Harris, MacDonald, and Thomson, who seemed to see things in a new and different way. They recorded what they saw in clearer line, in brighter colours, and in bolder patterns. After a period of inevitable resistance most of us agreed that their breaking with tradition had not only made for beauty but had also revealed some truths about our country which had hitherto escaped our notice. We began to realize that, because our atmospheric conditions are different from those in England, patterns were sharper and colours more vigorous; in fact, they were peculiar to the American scene.

A curious anticipation of this fresh view of our landscape, which seems to have escaped the notice of our historians, occurs over a century ago in an Englishwoman's account of her travels on this continent. This book, *Domestic Manners Of The Americans* by Mrs. [Frances] Trollope was published in 1832, and, as the title suggests, is largely concerned with the behaviour of our neighbours. With the not unusual tact of visitors to this continent Mrs. Trollope fills two volumes with caustic observations on everything from the table manners of the Americans to their religious customs.

But she does like the scenery. During the fall of her last year in America she takes a trip through western New York state to Niagara Falls. The colours of the changing trees elicit the following comment:

These tints are too bright for the landscape painter; the attempt to follow nature in an American autumn scene must be abortive. The colours are in reality extremely brilliant, but the medium through which they are seen increases the effect surprisingly. Of all the points in which America has the advantage of England, the one I felt most sensibly was the clearness and brightness of the atmosphere. By day and night this exquisite purity of air gives tenfold beauty to every object.

Later she changes her mind on the feasibility of depicting the scene, and gives some advice to the hypothetical artist who will have the requisite talent and courage:

... he must be as bold as a lion in colouring, or he will make nothing of it. There is a clearness of atmosphere, a strength of *chiaro oscuro*, a massiveness in the foliage, and a brilliance of contrast, that must make a colourist of anyone who has an eye. He



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must have courage to dip his pencil in shadows black  
as night, and light that might blind an eagle.

Here we have an observer who was far ahead of her  
time in seeing that a complete break with European  
traditions was necessary if our landscape was to be  
adequately interpreted. New materials, new methods,  
new techniques and, above all, new eyes had to be  
developed before the North American scene could  
appear on canvas in anything like its essential beauty  
and truth.

Yours truly,  
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same date are: *Pelleteurs de Neige* on an Ottawa street, which was selected for a tour in the United States with the Canadian show organized at Andover, Massachusetts; *La Glacière*, the ice harvest; and *Les Patineurs*, a picturesque subject he has developed variously a dozen times.

His freer and more imaginative way of painting now enabled his personality to emerge from the narrow chrysalis of realism. Each new effort led to an adventure, a risk; often it was rewarded by a discovery, by success. At every turn he was thrown into direct contact with fresh problems, the same problems encountered elsewhere by his advanced contemporaries. His rhythm accelerated from one canvas to the next, beginning with *La Procession* of 1942, where the red skirted church choristers in a procession in *plein-air*, with long strides, beat the storm about to break aloft.

*Danse campagnarde*, *Ronde endiablée*, *Conte fantastique*, by their titles reveal something new. A different chord has been plucked, deep and vibrant. Here the artist has turned to folklore for a change. He deals at first hand with rustic folk, lumberjacks, of the Gatineau valley. These rough bedfellows keep him awake at night, with their revelry, their tall tales, their bold tricks. Their stout legs are wound up like steel springs; they dance day and night, just as red devils would; no sooner do they pause than the readiest one intones a song, others

tell stories, anecdotes. Have you heard the latest one about a band of monsters let loose in the tall timbers: the Skwahdem, with four legs—one in front of the other; the Gwenn-of-the-Lake, circling around the wide waters because it is so crooked that it can't go straight, and the Safran—a fierce beast, its mouth four feet wide, swallowing man, woman and child at sight?

Stirred up by this wild woodland lore, Masson returned home, his memory full of vivid stories, his sketch-box and knapsack brimful with *feux-follets*, dwarfs, werewolves. Just as if he had been bewitched he remained for a while at odds with the civilized world.

Only in the light of this unique experience, among a woodland folk, can we appreciate the latest outburst of Masson at its full value. In responding to the strange dance of stamping feet, twisting bodies, and rollicking tunes under a ghostly light, he has truly found his full freedom.

Masson, on the move as never before, can now achieve the unpredictable. What is more he is fast gaining the recognition he deserves. He is a member of the Canadian Group of Painters, the Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour and the Canadian Society of Graphic Art. He has at last realized his ambition to become a full-time painter; he has mustered the courage to quit his job at the silver engravers, and to face the future with confidence as a career artist.

### *New National Arts Council*

Delegates from the sixteen cultural societies, which presented a brief to the special parliamentary committee on Reconstruction and Re-establishment in June 1944, met on December 5, 1945, and formed themselves into a body to be called the Canadian Arts Council.

This new council, of which Herman Voaden of Toronto was elected chairman, is to be a central organization with headquarters in Toronto. Membership is limited to artists' societies of a national character. The council will form a permanent liaison body between

these societies and will act in such matters as copyright, taxation and other legislation affecting artists' rights and in the interest of Canadian culture generally.

Other officers elected were: Arthur L. Phelps, Montreal, vice-chairman; Claude Lewis, Toronto, secretary; Erna Lennox Sutcliffe, Toronto, treasurer. The executive committee includes: Elizabeth Wyn Wood, D. M. Le Bourdais, Paul Duval and Garnard Kettle, all of Toronto, and John Murray Gibbon of Montreal.

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The Canadian Society of Canadian Painter Etchers and Engravers will hold its 30th Annual Exhibition in March at which the George A. Reid silver award will again be open. Entry forms must reach the secretary, C. J. Travers, 50 Wembley Drive, Toronto 8, by February 12th and prints be delivered to C.P.E. Exhibition, c/o Royal Ontario Museum, 100 Queen's Park Crescent, Toronto, not later than February 15th.

## CONTRIBUTORS

**George F. Drummond, M.R.A.I.C.**, Assistant Chief Architect, Canadian National Railways, has been closely associated with all the system's building projects in the past fifteen years. He is a graduate of the Glasgow School of Art and the Glasgow Technical College. Before joining the C.N.R., he was chief designer for one of the large Montreal architectural firms and was in private practice.

**Eric W. Thrift, B.Arch.**, Manitoba, 1935, M.Arch., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1937, is a lecturer in architecture and planning, University of Manitoba, and director of the Metropolitan Plan of Greater Winnipeg. He is a consultant designer on lighting equipment.

**F/L Carl Schaefer** spent part of 1945 in Iceland, where, as an official Canadian war artist, he recorded the activities of the Royal Canadian Air Force in that northern sphere of operations.

**Humphrey Carver** is an architect by profession. He is attached to the Department of Social Science of the University of Toronto, where he lectures on town planning.

**Marius Barbeau** is an anthropologist, a student and lecturer on folk arts, and the author of many books both in French and in English. He is on the staff of the National Museum of Canada, Ottawa.

**Graham McInnes** has written a brief history of Canadian art and many articles of criticism which have appeared in various periodicals. For the National Film Board, he has produced three films on Canadian painters.

**Captain Ralph Warner** is an official Australian war artist who spent some time in Canada recording Australia's contribution to the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan.

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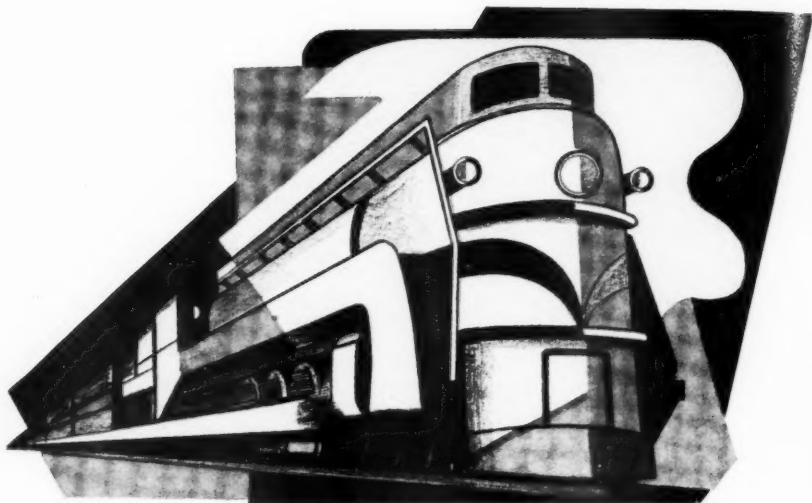
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